

CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A method for use with mail pieces and with a purchaser having an identity, the method comprising the steps of:

requiring, as a precondition of purchasing at least one postal indicium, receipt of first information indicative of the purchaser's identity,

deriving by electronic computation second information functionally from said first information;

printing said second information upon the at least one postal indicium;

receiving an addressed mail piece with the at least one postal indicium into the mail; and

delivering the addressed mail piece.

2. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the postal indicium is an adhesive postage stamp.

3. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the postal indicium is a meter strip.

4. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the postal indicium is printed on an envelope.

5. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the postal indicium is printed on a post card.

6. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the second information is an invisibly

printed bar code.

7. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the second information is a visibly printed bar code.

8. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the second information is a human-readable message.

9. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 further characterized in that the number of postal indicia comprise a plurality, and wherein the printing, receiving, and delivering steps are carried out with respect to each of the plurality of indicia.

10. (Currently amended) A method for use with purchased postal indicia, with mail pieces and with a purchaser having an identity, the method comprising the steps of:

requiring, as a precondition of receiving at least one addressed mail piece with a postal indicium into the mail, that the postal indicium bear second information derived by electronic computation from first information indicative of the identity of the purchaser;

receiving the at least one addressed mail piece with the postal indicium into the mail; and

delivering the at least one addressed mail piece.

11. (Previously presented) The method of claim 10 wherein the postal indicium is an adhesive postage stamp.

12. (Previously presented) The method of claim 10 wherein the postal indicium is a meter strip.

13. (Previously presented) The method of claim 10 wherein the postal indicium is printed on an

envelope.

14. (Previously presented) The method of claim 10 wherein the postal indicium is printed on a post card.

15. (Previously presented) The method of claim 10 wherein the second information is an invisibly printed bar code.

16. (Previously presented) The method of claim 10 wherein the second information is a visibly printed bar code.

17. (Previously presented) The method of claim 10 wherein the second information is a human-readable message.

18. (Previously presented) The method of claim 10 further characterized in that the number of addressed mail pieces comprise a plurality, and wherein the printing, receiving, and delivering steps are carried out with respect to each of the plurality of addressed mail pieces.

19. (Previously presented) The method of claim 10 further characterized in that the information indicative of the identity of the purchaser is cryptographically signed, the precondition further characterized as requiring successful checking of the cryptographic signature.

20. (Currently amended) A method for use with purchased postal indicia, with mail pieces and with a purchaser having an identity, the method comprising the steps of:

requiring, as a precondition of delivering at least one addressed mail piece with a postal indicium, that the postal indicium bear second information derived by electronic computation from first information indicative of the identity of the purchaser;

receiving the at least one addressed mail piece with the postal indicium into the mail; and

delivering the at least one addressed mail piece.

21. (Previously presented) The method of claim 20 wherein the postal indicium is an adhesive postage stamp.

22. (Previously presented) The method of claim 20 wherein the postal indicium is a meter strip.

23. (Previously presented) The method of claim 20 wherein the postal indicium is printed on an envelope.

24. (Previously presented) The method of claim 20 wherein the postal indicium is printed on a post card.

25. (Previously presented) The method of claim 20 wherein the second information is an invisibly printed bar code.

26. (Previously presented) The method of claim 20 wherein the second information is a visibly printed bar code.

27. (Previously presented) The method of claim 20 wherein the second information is a human-readable message.

28. (Previously presented) The method of claim 20 further characterized in that the number of addressed mail pieces comprise a plurality, and wherein the printing, receiving, and delivering steps are carried out with respect to each of the plurality of addressed mail pieces.

29. (Previously presented) The method of claim 20 further characterized in that the information

indicative of the identity of the purchaser is cryptographically signed, the precondition further characterized as requiring successful checking of the cryptographic signature.

30. (Currently amended) A method for use with mail pieces and with a recipient possessing a list of expected senders, and with a sender having an identity, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving a delivered mail piece bearing a postal indicium, the postal indicium bearing second information derived by electronic computation from first information indicative of the identity of the sender;

reading the second information indicative of the identity of the sender; and

determining whether the sender whose identity is indicated by the second information is on the list of expected senders.

31. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30 further characterized in that the information indicative of the identity of the sender that is borne in the postal indicium is cryptographically signed, and further characterized in that the reading step further comprises checking the cryptographic signature.

32. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30 comprising the additional step, performed in the event of the sender not being on the list of expected senders, of inspecting the delivered mail piece.

33-36. (Canceled)

37. (New) An adhesive postal indicium comprising:

information indicative of a postage amount printed by a first process;

information indicative of a country printed by the first process; and

cryptographically signed information indicative of an identity of a purchaser of the adhesive postal indicium;

the cryptographically signed information printed by a different process than the first process.

38. (New) A plurality of adhesive postal indicia, each postal indicium comprising:

information indicative of a postage amount printed by a first process;

information indicative of a country printed by the first process; and

cryptographically signed information indicative of an identity of a purchaser of the adhesive postal indicia;

the cryptographically signed information printed by a different process than the first process.

39. (New) Printing apparatus comprising:

a plurality of adhesive postal indicia, each postal indicium comprising information indicative of a postage amount and information indicative of a country, each postal indicium free of any cryptographically signed information indicative of an identity of a purchaser of the postal indicia; and

a printer adapted to print upon the plurality of adhesive postal indicia cryptographically signed information indicative of an identity of a purchaser of the adhesive postal indicia.

40. (New) A method for use with printing apparatus comprising a plurality of adhesive postal

indicia, each postal indicium comprising information indicative of a postage amount and information indicative of a country, each postal indicium free of any cryptographically signed information indicative of an identity of a purchaser of the postal indicia, and a printer adapted to print upon the plurality of adhesive postal indicia, the steps of:

receiving information indicative of an identity of a purchaser of the adhesive postal indicia;

cryptographically signing the information indicative of the identity of the purchaser of the adhesive postal indicia; and

printing upon the adhesive postal indicia, by means of the printer, information indicative of the cryptographically signed information.

41. (New) A method for use with mail pieces and with a recipient possessing a list of expected senders, and with a sender having an identity, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving a delivered mail piece bearing a postal indicium, the postal indicium bearing second information derived by electronic computation from first information indicative of the identity of the sender;

reading, by the recipient, the second information indicative of the identity of the sender; and

determining, by the recipient, whether the sender whose identity is indicated by the second information is on the list of expected senders.

42. (New) The method of claim 41 further characterized in that the information indicative of the identity of the sender that is borne in the postal indicium is cryptographically signed, and further characterized in that the reading step further comprises checking the cryptographic signature.

43. (New) The method of claim 41 comprising the additional step, performed in the event of the sender not being on the list of expected senders, and performed by the recipient, of inspecting the delivered mail piece.